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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to provide information on the job requirements for Minnesota coordinators of special needs, those people at the local school district level who are responsible for services to handicapped and/or disadvantaged students in vocational education. Information on the coordinator job came from three major sources: the state Plan for Vocational Education; a questionnaire survey of position and background, in which all 33 Minnesota coordinators of special needs participated; and the performance referents contained in 44 statements of required competencies as rated by job incumbents. State plan certification requirements were summarized as calling for a high degree of competence in special or vocational education, but allowing for exceptional instances in individuals who were qualified by some other route. Findings from the questionnaire sent to state coordinators were divided into three areas (sample findings are in parentheses): organizational variables (most of the coordinators were employed in Area Vocational-Technical Institutes); program variables (most programs were not restricted to a single age range); and incumbent variables (experiential backgrounds of incumbents were heterogeneous within education). A job description was derived from rated competency statements and included the supervision and evaluation of the performance of staff personnel. (Appended are a summary of the study conducted to investigate competencies perceived by incumbents to be required by the job and a sample copy of the survey questionnaire sent to the 33 Minnesota coordinators. (SBH)

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POSITION DESCRIPTION:

COORDINATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS IN MINNESOTA

Department of Educational Administration
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN 55108
May, 1976

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Investigators

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POSITION DESCRIPTION:

COORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS IN MINNESOTA

This reports the available information about the nature of a job in vocational education at the local school level in Minnesota. The job is that of Coordinator of Special Needs. It entails responsibility for the services to students in vocational education who are handicapped and/or disadvantaged.

This report is one of a series¹ dealing with the competencies required by the coordinator position. The overall project reported here was concerned with developing competency-based inservice training for these coordinators. The research was conducted by the Department of Educational Administration, University of Minnesota and supported in part by a grant (Empirical Role Definition of Local Special Needs Personnel in Vocational Education) from the U.S. Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.

This reports the nature of the coordinator job. Its three major sources are: the state Plan for Vocational Education in effect during the academic year 1975-76 (Minnesota Division of Vocational-Technical Education, 1975); a survey of position and background, in which all 33 coordinators in Minnesota participated; and the performance referents contained in 44 statements of required competencies as rated by the job incumbents.

¹Other reports relating to this project and similarly dated May, 1976 include: Competencies Required of Coordinators of Special Needs in Vocational Education in Minnesota as Perceived by Incumbents (Summary); Position Description: Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota; Recommendations: Competency based Inservice Training for Coordinators of Special Needs in Vocational Education.

Most of the information from the first two sources is found in this present report. The derivation of the competencies, and their ratings by the coordinators, are reported elsewhere (Weatherman & Krantz, 1976a; Krantz & Weatherman, 1976a).

Coordinator of Special Needs
Minnesota State Plan Description

Each state in its relationship to federal funding for vocational education prepares a state Plan describing the endeavor and providing rationale for specific funding. Contained in the Minnesota state Plan (Minnesota Division of Vocational Education, 1975) is a description of the duties of Coordinator of Special Needs.

The description has varied somewhat since it first appeared in 1971. The Coordinator of Special Needs was described in its first mention as:

Responsible to the district vocational education director for planning, promotion, development, review and improvement of vocational programs as they relate to handicapped and/or disadvantaged persons. Shall be a liaison between vocational education and other groups or agencies serving special needs students. Shall be responsible for that part of the annual local plan dealing with special needs students.

The duties were thus described in essentially their modern form. The plan in effect during the 1975-76 fiscal year described duties as follows:

Shall prepare and implement a delivery system which addresses itself to fulfilling the unique needs of students with special needs.

Shall provide the necessary support services to the student with special needs where deemed appropriate.

Shall coordinate and facilitate inservice training of regular staff to more adequately understand and meet the needs of the students with special needs.

Shall coordinate with and assist the vocational center in their service area in planning and implementing a delivery system to meet the needs of students with special needs enrolled in secondary programs.

Shall annually provide a report to the state regarding progress of the local special needs programs.

The job description's placement within the outline of the state Plan may or may not be significant; it was listed in the section which followed the descriptions of local administrative and supervisory personnel, and occurred in the section dealing with local instructional personnel. It was preceeded by the description of the vocational instructor of special needs students and was followed by descriptions of the duties of vocational instructor-evaluator in work adjustment centers, instructor-coordinator of special needs students, support services manager for special needs students, remedial-related subjects instructor, vocational social worker/advocate for students of special needs, interpreter for the deaf, vocational tutor, instructional support staff, training specialist in a modified program, training tryout specialist, and vocational education advisor. It is worth noting that most of the above jobs, if they exist at the local level, are generally under the supervision of the Coordinator of Special Needs.

As to qualifications for certification of Coordinators of Special Needs, three options were given by the state Plan. Each of the three options required a four year degree, one year or 2,000 hours varied work experience outside education, a course in philosophy of vocational education, and 60 clock hours of human relations training; except that substitution for the four year degree was possible under the third option. The options were:

1. Possess a degree in special education (mentally retarded or special learning behavior problems); shall prior to renewal of two year certificate have 9 credits in: vocational counseling, education of disadvantaged, and organization/administration of vocational education; shall have three years of teaching and/or administrative experience.

2. Possess degree in vocational education; shall prior to renewal of two year certificate have 12 credits in: education of the exceptional child, prevocational assessment, psychology/education of the mentally retarded, and psychology/education in special learning/behavior problems. Shall have three years teaching and/or administrative experience.
3. Shall have at least two years teaching experience or administrative experience working with students with special needs. Shall possess necessary personality characteristics which allow the person to work effectively with students with special needs as attested to by the local vocational director.

Summarizing the certification requirements, it appeared that the state expected a fairly high degree of competence in special or vocational education, but allowed for exceptional instances of persons who were qualified by some other route.

Collateral From State Plan

The state Plan for Vocational Education, 1965 carried as an appendix a state Student Senate resolution and a cover memorandum from the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational-Technical Education to the State Commissioner for Education. The memorandum called attention to the Student Senate resolution without endorsing or challenging it. The resolution mentioned a 29 percent drop out rate in the Area Vocational-Technical Institutes the previous year, and called for implementation of "a program that will provide services to fit the needs of each special needs student."

Another memorandum in the Plan appendix refers to the aggregate size of the special needs programs in Minnesota. The occasion for the memorandum was that special state funding of two million dollars for special needs services was not approved, and the memorandum indicated what uses would have been made of the funds if they had been available. Of the two million dollars, \$500,000 would have been used to fund vocational assessment centers within the Area Vocational-Technical Institutes (AVTIs), \$300,000 would have

provided support services to post-secondary students in regular programs, \$200,000 would have been invested in the vocational advisory services program to minority persons and one million dollars would have been addressed to "the many adults needing community based training stations throughout the state. In cooperation with the state hospitals, DVR, and the Department of Corrections, some 900 individuals could have been better assimilated in the community and the labor market." Generally speaking, these programs, together with the existing programs that were funded, would have been under the supervision of Coordinators of Special Needs at the local level.

The state Plan section which gave annual and long range goals listed a post-secondary objective as "to provide all AVTIs with a special needs coordinator." The plan called for 33 such positions by 1976 (that objective was met). The budgeted funds for this objective were \$350,000, Part B Federal monies and \$100,000 of state and local monies. This objective was stated under the objective of disadvantaged students and was not repeated under the heading of the handicapped; presumably the same objective would be served with respect to the handicapped students by meeting the objective as stated.

A working paper authorized by the state supervisor of special needs in 1975 stated that secondary vocational centers should arrange to receive program supervision under some agreement with the special needs coordinator in the appropriate AVTI. Secondary centers are regular secondary schools with vocational education programs located within them. One or more secondary center may exist in the primary service area of an AVTI. In Minnesota AVTIs are each operated by local school districts (except for three that are operated by specially created joint school districts) and serve predominantly post-secondary and adult students.

Survey of Coordinator Job

At the time this study was begun, very little summary or descriptive information could be found in regard to Coordinators of Special Needs. The job was relatively new, with over 2/3 of the coordinators having less than two years experience on the job. A survey was therefore made using a questionnaire to elicit from the incumbent coordinators their description of their positions, the position context and their own backgrounds.

Questionnaire

The major portion of the necessary questionnaire for position description was available from a previous study. The general format of the questionnaire was multiple choice to facilitate interpretation and data management. The content dealt with program information, with the program administrator or coordinator as the reference point. This questionnaire was expanded for the present study in consultation with personnel of the State Special Needs Unit and was subjected to pilot testing.

The questionnaire in its final form was seven pages in length (see Appendix A). Three major classes of informational variable were covered: organizational variables such as the organization and administrative structure within which the coordinator works; program characteristic variables such as size of student body and extent of program segregation-integration; and individual characteristics of the incumbent such as training and experience and professional affiliation. The questionnaire closed with two open-ended questions calling for brief statements of work aspects for which the coordinator found himself best prepared and least well prepared.

Procedure for Position Description

The position questionnaire was mailed to each of the 33 Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota, together with a cover letter soliciting their

cooperation. Stamped return envelopes were provided.

Within a week of their distribution, nearly half of the questionnaires had been returned. Two-thirds were returned within two weeks and all 33 had been received by the investigator by the end of a four week period. The promptness and completeness of the return is mentioned as an indication of the extent to which the coordinators accepted and cooperated with the research. Some of the alacrity should probably be attributed to the fact that within the two weeks prior to distribution of the questionnaires, the coordinators had met with the state Division of Vocational Education staff who had explained the purpose of the research and had encouraged cooperation.

In the course of receiving and following up on questionnaires, the decision was made to change the identity of the respondent from one of the programs. The coordinator who had first been identified (though under a job title different from coordinator) had begun the program in that district. His job duties broadened, however, and another person was placed in charge of the special needs program. It was this second person whose actual duties conformed to the job of Coordinator of Special Needs. It was his span of responsibility and program that was restricted to special needs concerns, the first person having assumed responsibility also for special education. The second person was therefore entered into the study and the first one was dropped; the number and identity of programs was maintained and the number of coordinators remained at 33.

As responses were examined, certain implausible statements were discovered. For example, a coordinator reported that his program's total budget was \$2000, whereas his salary alone would far exceed that amount. Other coordinators reported that they were responsible to a special school district organized specifically for vocational education, whereas it was

known that the Area Vocational-Technical Institutes in which they were employed were the responsibility of general school districts. Other and less obvious kinds of suspect data were reported. In order to avoid tallying evidently or even clearly fallacious information, telephone calls were made to the respondents by the investigator in order to discuss, verify, and correct the suspect information. Telephone consultation of this kind was held with 13 of the 33 respondents, and similar discussion was held with four others incidental to other communication. In this way, all suspect information was verified or corrected.

As incoming returns were inspected and contacts made with respondents, the decision was made by the investigator to cease gathering information on program budgets. The reason for this decision was that reliable information appeared to be unobtainable from the smaller programs. Other than this deletion, completed position questionnaires were secured from 100 percent of the population under study.

The findings of the position questionnaire when tallied yielded a set of position descriptions which aggregated make up a description of the job of coordinator of special needs in Minnesota.

Organizational Variables

Several questions dealt with the kind of organization in which the position is located, and with the position's location within the organization. These organizational variables are displayed in Tables 1 through 6.

Table 1

Geographic Location of Incumbents' Programs

Location	Number	Percent
Central city over 50,000 and/or suburbs	9	27.3
Urban/rural, including cities up to 50,000	12	36.4
Mostly rural, including cities under 10,000	11	33.3
Other	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Total	33	100.0

Geographic location was diverse, and roughly equal among the three major categories.

Most of the coordinators were employed in Area Vocational-Technical Institutes (AVTI's), most of which were operated by local comprehensive school districts. This item of information was one of those which necessitated telephone calls to some of the incumbents, several of whom had reported that they were employed by districts organized primarily for vocational education.

Table 2

Type of Local Educational Agency in Which
the Incumbents Were Employed

Type of Agency	Number	Percent
Single comprehensive school district	28	84.8
Board organized for vocational education	4	12.1
Intermediate unit, nonvocational	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Total	33	100.0

Conversation indicated that some coordinators were not clearly aware that the AVTI reported in most instances to a comprehensive school board.

The four boards organized for vocational education included the state's three vocational districts specially created by legislation and one vocational center operated by a joint board. The nonvocational intermediate unit was also operated by a joint board, but one organized primarily for special education.

Table 3

Person to Whom the Coordinator Is Responsible
in the Conduct of His Work

Supervisor	Number	Percent
Superintendent of a district	2	6.1
Director of a school or AVTI	18	54.5
Department head	4	12.1
Director of Special Education	4	12.1
Other	4	12.1
More than one of the above	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Total	33	100.0

The preponderance of AVTI organizations in the reporting population accounted in large measure for the fact that over half of the coordinators reported themselves to be directly responsible to AVTI directors. In two of the state's special vocational education districts, the superintendent was in direct supervisory relationship to the coordinator, and in those districts there was no conventional AVTI director. The four directors of special education tallied in Table 3 were responsible to vocational education line supervisors, or had direct regulatory responsibility to the State Division of Vocational Education.

The position questionnaire asked each respondent to write in his own position title, and the name and title of his immediate supervisor, in addition to checking the supervisor's title closest to the options tallied in Table 3. The write-in responses were so diverse as to make tabulation unfeasible, but some tentative patterns emerged. The most common pattern, reported by 14 of the respondents, was that of an incumbent titled as some close variant of Coordinator of Special Needs and reporting to a superintendent, to a vocational school director or assistant director, or to a principal. Reporting to the same kinds of supervisors were eight other coordinators with different local position titles: two entitled as instructors, two as Support Service Managers, a learning center director, a director of special services, a project director, and a department chairman.

The local titles of the coordinators themselves were assessed by the questionnaire in two different ways, one by check-off of stated options and the other by write-in.

Table 4

Coordinators' Local Position Titles, Checked
as Being Closest to the Given Options

Title Option	Number	Percent
Special Needs Coordinator	24	72.7
Support Services Manager	5	15.2
Director of Special Services	1	3.0
Other	<u>3</u>	<u>9.1</u>
Total	33	100.0

Table 5

Coordinators' Local Position Titles
as Reported by Write-in

Local Job Title	Number	Percent
Coordinator of Special Needs	19	57.6
Instructor	4	12.1
Support Services Manager	2	6.1
Vocational Director	1	3.0
Director, Project or Center	2	6.1
Chairman, Related Instruction Department	1	3.0
Work Coordinator	1	3.0
Special Needs Counselor	1	3.0
Blank	<u>2</u>	<u>6.1</u>
Total	33	100.0

Local position title alone was evidently not the key to commonality in this population. Some of the comments written on the questionnaires, and some of the telephone contacts with the incumbents, indicated a dissatisfaction with the existing position titles. Some comments indicated tension, such as "I am an administrator, and would resent being called a coordinator," and "coordinator is feared because it is believed the taxpayers feel us 'administration heavy.'" At least one incumbent was found to be undergoing fundamental redefinition of his position during the survey.

The survey was conducted during January and February of 1976. Each incumbent was asked to report when he began to function as Coordinator of Special Needs.

Table 6

Date When Respondents Were First Employed as Coordinators

Starting Date	Number	Percent
Before 1/70	1	3.0
1/70 - 12/70	2	6.1
1/71 - 12/71	1	3.0
1/72 - 12/72	0	0.0
1/73 - 12/73	3	9.1
1/74 - 6/74	2	6.1
7/74 - 12/74	10	30.3
1/75 - 6/75	3	9.1
7/75 - 12/75	9	27.3
Not reported	<u>2</u>	<u>6.1</u>
Total	33	100.0

Over two-thirds (73.9%) of the Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota were first so employed within the two calendar years immediately preceding the study, this fact emphasizing the newness of the job. With few exceptions, the incumbents were the first to hold their positions; one exception was that of a coordinator who in 1974 replaced a predecessor who had begun as coordinator in 1971 and whose duties had since so broadened as to remove him from the population under study.

Program Variables

The special needs programs supervised by the Coordinators of Special Needs are of many kinds. Several program variables were ascertained by the position questionnaire. Characteristics of the programs are shown in Tables 7 through 18.

Table 7

Extent to Which the Program Is Operated Separately
from the Regular Vocational Education Program

Separateness	Number	Percent
Physically distinct service facilities	2	6.1
No separate facilities, fully integrated	13	39.4
Neither completely separate nor integrated	17	51.5
Not determined	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Total	33	100.0

One of the physically distinct programs was reported to operate in a multidistrict regional special services center, and the other as a remedial center located in an AVTI. Most programs, it will be noted in Table 7, had some segregated and some integrated aspects. The 13 fully integrated programs operated mostly as a set of supportive services, including counseling and the modification or supplementation of regular vocational education classes.

The reported program sizes in terms of numbers of students are not to be taken as accurate reports, or at least not as meaningful representations of program service volumes. Telephone calls were made to some of the less plausibly reported programs, and it became evident that pupil accounting methods were highly variable. One coordinator reported a current membership of 20, but a service volume during September to January of 78.

Table 8

Programs Categorized by Numbers of Students Reported to be
in Average Daily Membership at the Time of Survey

Average Membership	Number	Percent
0 - 24	4	12.1
25 - 49	9	27.3
50 - 74	8	24.2
75 - 99	0	0.0
100 - 199	7	21.2
200 - 299	2	6.1
300 or more	2	6.1
Not reported	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Total	33	100.0

Other programs reported that almost all students served since September were still in sustained service in January. A number of programs had no formal period of service to students, and hence had no verifiable number of students receiving service. In short, present pupil accounting methods do not permit the question to be answered reliably. This conclusion is strengthened by calculating the reported number of special needs students as a percent of the total vocational enrollment in the applicable AVTI; the obtained percents ranged from 45 percent in an AVTI with over 1500 students to 3 percent in an AVTI with approximately 1000 students. The data in Table 8 are meaningful as coordinator reports, but not as factual service figures.

Table 9

Age Levels of Students Served in the 33 programs, Reported
as Percents of the Students with Special Needs

Age Level	Number of Programs with Stated Percents					
	0%	1-9%	10-49%	50-89%	90-99%	100%
Junior high school	28	2	2	1	0	0
Senior high school	18	2	6	1	2	3
Post-secondary to age 21	6	0	5	17	4	0
Adult over age 21	7	3	17	6	0	0

The primary import of Table 9 is that the Coordinators of Special Needs were responsible for a number of different age configurations. The comparatively large number of programs with zero junior or senior high school enrollment may be associated with the preponderance of programs in AVTIs, institutions that are mostly post secondary in mission. What is of more practical significance is the fact that most programs are not restricted to a single age range.

Table 10

Types of Special Needs Reported of Students in the 33 Programs,
Given as Estimated Percents of Enrollment

Need Type	Number of Programs with Stated Percents					
	0%	1-9%	10-49%	50-89%	90-99%	100%
Handicapped only	5	9	15	3	0	1
Disadvantaged only	5	4	8	11	4	1
Both	7	7	12	5	2	0
Neither	17	5	8	0	2	1

The meaning of Table 10 is difficult to state unequivocally. The lack of a good student accounting system, mentioned earlier, is evident in the

implausible report that nearly half of the programs served students who were neither handicapped nor disadvantaged, that one-third had a significant number (10% or more) of such students, and three had 90 percent or more of such students. In the light of the programs being set up to serve handicapped and/or disadvantaged students only, the reported percentages should be considered unreliable.

Similarly, data reported regarding the programs' budgets were considered too unreliable to warrant even tabulation. This was true to such an extent that late respondents were asked to omit answers to the question. Telephone contacts with the respondents seemed to indicate that those with the larger budgets, those with budgets of over \$50,000, were reporting from a formal budget document that had been developed under their direct management; those reporting budgets in the lower ranges were reporting estimates that, in some cases, did not take into account the incumbent's salary. A reasonably confident statement can be made, on the basis of all information gathered, that seven programs have budgets of over \$100,000 annually.

Reports about personnel supervised by the Coordinators of Special Needs, on the other hand, appear to be reliable except as qualified below.

Table 11

Teachers Supervised by Coordinators of Special Needs

Number of Teachers	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	15	45.5
1 - 4	10	30.3
5 - 9	4	12.1
10 - 14	0	0.0
15 - 19	1	3.0
20 - 24	2	6.1
25 - 29	0	0.0
30 - 34	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 12

**Support Service Managers and Case Service Managers Supervised
by Coordinators of Special Needs**

Number of Service Managers	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	27	87.9
1	1	3.0
2	3	9.1
3	1	3.0
-	-	-
9	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 13

**Secretaries and Other Clerical Workers Supervised
by Coordinators of Special Needs**

Number of Clerical Workers	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	10	30.3
1	17	51.5
2	3	9.1
3	0	0.0
4	2	6.1
-	-	-
10	<u>1</u>	<u>3.3</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 14

Vocational Evaluators and Work Evaluators Supervised
by Coordinators of Special Needs

Number of Evaluators	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	30	90.9
1	1	3.0
2	1	3.0
3	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 15

Aides Supervised by Coordinators of Special Needs
Excluding Unpaid Student Aides

Number of Aides	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	18	54.5
1	4	12.1
2	2	6.1
3	3	9.1
4	-	-
5	2	6.1
-	-	-
15	3	9.1
-	-	-
19	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 16

Tutors, Including Certified Instructors Functioning as Tutors,
Supervised by Coordinators of Special Needs;
Does Not Include Unpaid Student Tutors

Number of Tutors	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	24	72.7
1	1	3.0
2	1	3.0
3	0	0.0
4	1	3.0
5	0	0.0
6	1	3.0
7	2	6.1
8	1	3.0
9	1	3.0
10	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 17

Other Personnel Supervised by Coordinators of Special Needs

Number of Other Personnel	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	16	48.5
1	3	9.1
2	2	6.1
3	3	9.1
4	1	3.0
5	4	12.1
6	1	3.0
7	0	0.0
8	1	3.0
9	0	0.0
10	1	3.0
-	-	-
15	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 18

Total Personnel Supervised by Coordinators of Special Needs

Number of Personnel	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs
0	5	15.2
1 - 4	6	18.2
5 - 9	8	24.2
10 - 14	6	18.2
15 - 19	2	6.1
20 - 24	4	12.1
25 - 29	0	0.0
30 - 34	1	3.0
-	-	-
50 - 54	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

The most important qualification to bear in mind while interpreting these personnel data is that the respondents were not instructed to respond in terms of full time equivalent positions. Each person reported to be supervised was not necessarily a full time employee. Some positions, such as those of Case Services or Support Services Manager, were full time without known exception. Other positions, such as Tutor, were more often than not part time. Some of the clerical positions, each reported as one full datum, were assigned half time to the Coordinator of Special Needs. The entabed numbers therefore represent span of control rather than size of program, although the two are probably related.

It does seem probable, however, both on rational grounds and on the basis of collateral evidence, that the personnel numbers were reported reliably within the qualifications stated above.

Each coordinator was asked whether any part of his special needs program

was provided to students in a non-school facility such as a sheltered workshop, and the fee paid by the school and not by vocational rehabilitation. This question was included for its implications regarding the use of community resources, and because some programs in other states were known to follow this practice. Responses, after refinement by telephone, indicated that one of the coordinators followed this practice of purchasing some services, and that the others did not.

The program descriptions showed a fairly wide diversity of program characteristics in terms of such variables as use of specialized resources, size and nature of student body, and staffing.

Incumbent Variables

The backgrounds in training and experience of the incumbents, and their professional orientations, were likewise found to be diverse, as is shown in Tables 19 through 23.

Most of the incumbents reported degrees of Masters level or beyond.

Except for vocational rehabilitation and business management, most of the coordinators have had at least nine credits of training (roughly three courses) in each of the listed areas.

Table 19

Levels of Academic Preparation Reported
by Coordinators of Special Needs

Highest Degree	Number	Percent
B.A. or B.S.	4	12.1
B.A. or B.S. plus 45 quarter credits	4	12.1
M.A. or M.S.	11	33.3
M.A. or M.S. plus 45 quarter credits	13	39.4
Ph.D. or Ed.D	<u>1</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	33	100.0

Table 20

Areas in Which Coordinators of Special Needs Have 9 or More
Quarter Credits of Undergraduate or Graduate Training

Areas	Number	Percent
General Education	33	100.0
Vocational, Trade and Industrial	26	78.8
Special Education	19	57.6
Vocational Rehabilitation	10	30.3
Educational Administration, Program Management	17	51.5
Business Administration	7	21.2

Table 21

Occupations in Which Coordinators of Special Needs
Have Had at Least Eight Months of Experience

Occupation	Number	Percent
Teacher in vocational education	13	39.4
Vocational education counselor	6	18.2
Teacher-coordinator, vocational education	11	33.3
Case Services or Support Services Manager	15	45.5
Teacher in special education	12	36.4
Director or supervisor, special education	7	21.2
School psychologist	0	0.0
Rehabilitation counselor, state employer	4	12.1
Vocational Adjustment Coordinator	2	6.1
Teacher in general education	18	54.5
School counselor, general education	7	21.2

The data in Table 21 were generated by the coordinators checking off presented options, and hence may not be exhaustive; the data in Table 22 were generated by classifying responses to an open-ended question.

The experiential backgrounds of the incumbent coordinators were found to be quite heterogeneous within education. Most of them had been teachers within general education. Nearly half (45.5%) had been Case Services or

Support Services Managers, a kind of direct service special needs position from which it is reasonable to assume that they were recruited to become coordinators. This fact probably led several respondents to omit that job as a response to the question reported in Table 22, viewing the transition to coordinator status as a change of title only without abrupt change of duties.

Table 22

Titles of Last Jobs Held by Incumbents Prior to
Becoming Coordinators of Special Needs

Job Titles	Number	Percent
Vocational education instructor	8	24.2
Vocational education supervisor	3	9.1
Special education instructor	7	21.2
Special education supervisor	2	6.1
General education instructor	5	15.2
General education supervisor	2	6.1
Vocational rehabilitation counselor	1	3.0
Vocational adjustment coordinator	2	6.1
Job in private employment	3	9.1
Totals	33	100.0

The number of coordinators whose last previous job was as special or general education instructor, a total of 12 or 36.4 percent, is noteworthy. Some of those classified as general educators, it is known from other sources, were experienced in remedial communication teaching. In any event, two-thirds of the coordinators were recruited immediately from jobs outside of vocational education, although most of them (see Table 21) had had vocational education experience in the past.

A final incumbent datum, taken as an index of professional identification, was membership in selected professional organizations.

Most coordinators were members of the primary professional organization in the field of vocational education, the American Vocational Association.

Most were also members of the National Association of Vocational Education Special Needs Personnel.

Tabel 23

Professional Organizational Membership Reported
by Coordinators of Special Needs

Organization	Number	Percent
American Vocational Association	21	63.6
Council for Exceptional Children	9	27.3
National Rehabilitation Association	5	15.2
American Personnel and Guidance Association	5	15.2
Minnesota Administrators Special Education	6	18.2
National Association of Vocational Education Special Needs Personnel	19	57.6

On the whole, Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota were found to be diverse in their personal backgrounds and affiliations. The diversity of their programs and program settings has been noted earlier. The question to be addressed later is whether this diversity can be taken to represent a single group with a wide range of characteristics, or whether it represents subgroups, each with a more restricted range of characteristics. The test of subgroup divisibility will be addressed in terms of the coordinators' reports of what competencies they need in their positions; the competency ratings will be the subject of the next section.

Competency Referents as Job Description

The job of Coordinator of Special Needs could reasonably be described as the exercise of those competencies which the job requires. That is, when a coordinator has reported what he must be able to do, he has also reported what he does.

A job description arrived at from rated competency statements is necessarily incomplete. As McCleary (1973) has said "perhaps the most difficult activity,

but a very necessary one, is the actual writing of competency statements. The scope of the statement, its form, and the elements to be included all create 'hangups'. If possible, accept the idea that education (competency attainment) is an open system: (1) All possible competencies will never be identified and some can only be vaguely defined, (2) some competencies that you will identify will not have any identifiable means of attainment, and (3) some will seem extremely simple and mundane while others will appear to be so complex as to be unrealistic. Best progress has been made when statements are molar in form." This limitation of scope cited by McCleary applied to the list of competencies which the coordinators of special needs used as the basis for their ratings. The limitations similarly apply to any job description derived from the competency referents.

A full description of each competency referent and of the distributions of ratings for the statements would require a six-page table which will not be repeated here. It will be found in the companion report (Krantz & Weatherman, 1976a). For present purposes, it will suffice to highlight those competencies which seem to illustrate the range of the coordinator's responsibilities and which describe the job beyond what is given in preceeding sections of this report.

Most coordinators find it at least important to participate in the selection of personnel and most find it essential to supervise and evaluate the performance of staff personnel.

Most coordinators reported that it is at least important for them to determine the size and type of the special needs program through needs assessment, identify and recommend physical plant requirements, acquire funding from a variety of sources to support the program, and design and implement a program evaluation process. On the other hand, only slightly

more than one-half of the incumbents reported that they had found it important to design a system for vocational evaluation of students using real or simulated work as the medium.

Most of the coordinators reported that they found it at least important to lead a multidisciplinary team meeting regarding the special needs, develop an individualized descriptive program plan for individual students, assist students to solve interpersonal problems, make a determination of the student's needs and potentials, provide vocational counseling and guidance to students with special needs, provide remedial and developmental instruction in basic skills and apply basic learning theory and principles of behavior management to the design of instructional programs for individual students.

Most of the coordinators reported that it was important or essential for them to maintain the programs record system in accordance with state regulations and format, authorize purchases and expenditures in accordance with standard practice, interpret and implement at the local level the guidelines and philosophy of the state plan for vocational education, comply with state and federal laws and regulations on behalf of the special needs program, and develop and maintain a special needs budget that appropriately accounts for funds from several sources.

In general, when the designation "most" appears above, this indicates that at least two-thirds of the respondents made the described rating.

Summary

In summary, the job of Coordinator of Special Needs in vocational education in Minnesota can be described from three standpoints: specification in the state plan for vocational education, survey of the 33 extant positions as reported by incumbents, and as the exercise of the competencies reported to be needed by the incumbents.

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APPENDIX A

COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF COORDINATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA AS PERCEIVED BY INCUMBENTS

(Summary)

This summarizes the procedures and findings of an investigation conducted by the Department of Educational Administration, University of Minnesota, and supported in part by the U.S. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, An Empirical Role Definition of Local Special Needs Personnel in Vocational Education.

BACKGROUND

This study was carried out as part of a programmatic research and development effort. That effort is the development of inservice training for persons who at the local educational agency level are responsible for programs of vocational education for handicapped and disadvantaged students. In Minnesota, this job is designated as Coordinator of Special Needs.

The Department of Educational Administration conducts inservice training for directors of special education. The present investigation was suggested by some of the developments in that program. Other activities have included a survey of special needs personnel in the various state divisions of vocational education and a survey of local special needs programs in the various states.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the present investigation was to delineate the nature of the job of Coordinator of Special Needs in Minnesota, and to determine what competencies are perceived by the incumbents to be required by that job.

The study investigated the following:

1. Characteristics of the organizational context of the job, nature of the program supervised, and background and professional orientation of the incumbents.
2. Competencies required on the job as perceived by the incumbents, and,
3. Whether, in their perceptions of their competency requirements, the Minnesota Coordinators of Special Needs constitute an indistinguishable single population or whether they are made up of distinguishable subpopulations.

Available information indicated that the job would be diverse and that the incumbents would be varied in background and orientation.

RELATED INFORMATION

Special Needs programming in vocational education (service to students who are handicapped and/or disadvantaged) has attained high visibility, and

its lead personnel are the subject of considerable interest. The job of Coordinator of Special Needs, to which is allocated the responsibility of special needs programs at the local level, has emerged as pivotal in the enterprise. The job is defined in general terms in the Minnesota State Plan for vocational education, but neither in Minnesota nor elsewhere was there found a statement of what competencies are required by the job.

The competencies of educational personnel have likewise become the subjects of extensive literature. The competency based movement is relatively recent, with most of its literature appearing in the 1970's. The competencies approach has become the most common one in the design of new training programs for educational personnel.

A state by state search has not revealed the existence of a preservice or inservice training program designed for Coordinators of Special Needs. Rate of entry into the job appears to be rapid and the incumbents appear to have been variously recruited. The specific facts regarding this, however, had not been previously ascertained.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Population The population studied consisted of all 33 present Coordinators of Special Needs in Minnesota.

Competency statements A jury of experts was assembled to generate competency statements. The jury consisted of: the state Coordinator of Vocational Special Needs Programs; the state Coordinator of Vocational Programs for the Handicapped; a University of Minnesota professor of vocational education; the president of the state association of special needs personnel, the secretary of the association, and another local special needs coordinator; a University of Minnesota professor of educational administration; the director of a private rehabilitation facility; and a consultant engaged in developing a state-wide information system for special needs. The jury members individually submitted competency statements and then met for a full day and an additional half-day to refine and collate the statements. The result was a list of 44 competency statements.

Position description A questionnaire was developed for generating information about the organizational context, the program characteristics, and the coordinator preparation and orientation. This questionnaire was submitted to the 33 coordinators in Minnesota, with 100% return.

Competency rating The 44 competency statements were presented to the Coordinators with the request to check each competency as being either Not Needed, Useful, Important, or Essential to the conduct of the job. Returns were received from every coordinator.

Analysis The returns were statistically checked for patterns that might indicate reliability of the instruments. The characteristics as revealed on the position questionnaire and the ratings of the competencies were tabulated. Finally, 17 competencies were checked against 7 characteristics of the positions and of the incumbents to determine whether the competency ratings were those of a single population or of distinguishable subpopulations.

FINDINGS

Instrument reliability To the limited extent that verification was possible, the instruments appeared to be operating with reasonable reliability.

Organizational variables Geographic location was found to be roughly proportionate among central city, urban/rural, and rural. Most incumbents were found in Area Vocational-Technical Institutes operated by single school districts, and most were under the immediate direction of the school director. Most of the incumbents had job titles similar to that of coordinator and over two-thirds of the jobs had been established within the past two calendar years.

Program variables Most programs were neither completely integrated nor completely segregated. In size they ranged from ten to more than 300 students. Age levels served ranged from junior high to adults over age 21. Types of student need were reported equivocally. The coordinators reported supervising personnel ranging in number from zero (five programs) to over 20 (six programs).

Incumbent variables Most of the incumbents reported academic degrees of Masters level or beyond. Most of them had had at least 9 quarter credits of training in general education, vocational trade and industrial education, special education, and educational administration. Most had been employed in vocational education in the past. Most of them had taught in general education and over a third of them had taught in special education. Nearly two-thirds were members of the American Vocational Association and more than half were members of the National Association of Vocational Education Special Needs Personnel.

Competency ratings Most of the 44 competencies were rated by the Coordinators as being at least Important if not Essential. On the other hand, at least one coordinator reported each of 39 competencies to be not needed at all in his situation; only five competencies had no ratings of Not Needed. The most common rating of the competencies was Essential.

Contingencies A total of 17 competencies were selected to be matched against 7 variables from the position questionnaire. The proposition to be tested was that variables on the position questionnaire could be used to divide the responding population into groups who would rate the competencies differently. Of the 119 comparisons, 4 were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level. This finding does not allow a practical division of the population into groups; for practical purposes, they may be considered as a single, but diverse, population.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reliability of information The information in general was considered to be adequately reliable for this early stage in the development of a training program.

Population unity Useful subpopulations among Minnesota Coordinators of Special Needs were not discriminated by this study. The population is best treated as unitary and the positions are best considered to be variants of the same job. Within that same job, there is much diversity and training approaches should be individualized.

Competency patterns Perceptions of competency needs lacked unanimity; however, the clear majority of coordinators considered most competencies on the list to be at least Important. The conclusion is that the expert jury was successful in generating competency statements that were reasonably compatible with the job of coordinator. Some of the ratings lead to the conclusion that some of the coordinators are not yet familiar with all of the requirements of their jobs.

The job The job of Coordinator of Special Needs is emergent and not yet fully defined. It consists of a new general class of personnel in vocational education, the first middle managers who are not trade-specific. The job has multidisciplinary affinities, with roots in at least vocational education, special education, and vocational rehabilitation, as was evident in the competency ratings and in the incumbents' backgrounds.

Recommendations to the field It is recommended that the state education agency and the incumbent coordinators engage in continued clarification of the nature of the coordinator job. The diversity of program and job context should not be unnecessarily discouraged. Neither should there be suppression of the diversity in incumbent background and orientation at this stage in the field's development.

Recommendations for training The general research and development plan of which this study was an early segment was confirmed in its immediate succeeding stages:

1. It is recommended that there be developed an individualized, modular, competency based inservice training program for Coordinators of Special Needs.
2. It is recommended that investigation be made of the applicability of this study's findings and recommendations to other states.
3. Since the position is in many respects analogous to that of the director of special education, consideration should be given to using the already developed training program for special education directors where applicable.
4. It is recommended that a determination be made of actual competency requirements of the job as well as the presently reported incumbent perceptions of competency need.
5. Finally, the competency list used in this study is affirmed to be an appropriate one and is recommended for further refinement, such as the division into administrative and service competencies and a free sort to develop a taxonomy of competencies.

Richard Weatherman,
Project Director

Gordon Krantz,
Project Coordinator

4/12/76

APPENDIX B

MINNESOTA SPECIAL NEEDS

LEAD PERSONNEL

ID: 1 (1) (2,3,4) (5)

1. JOB TITLE - Please check the box at the right which follows the ONE statement which is closest to the title by which your job is known in your district's personnel list. Need not correspond to your state certificate.

(6)

Special Needs Coordinator	☐	1
Support Services Manager	☐	2
Program Manager	☐	3
Director of Special Services	☐	4
Case Services Manager	☐	5
Other	☐	6

2. IN ADDITION to answering the first question, please write on the line below the title by which your job is listed in your district's personnel list.

3. Do you think that your job should have a different title? If so, please write on the line below what you think it should be:

4. To whom are you directly responsible in the conduct of your job? Please check the box at the right following the title which is closest to the title of the person to whom you report directly.

(7)

Superintendent of a district	☐	1
Director of a school or AVII	☐	2
Department head	☐	3
Director of Special Education	☐	4
Special Needs Coordinator	☐	5
Other (write in)	☐	6
More than one of the above	☐	7

5. Name and title of your immediate supervisor.

NOTE: Right-margin numbers are for keypunch use.

6. For whose work, besides your own, are you responsible? In the blank following each title, write in the NUMBER of such persons for whose work you carry professional or supervisory responsibility. Count a part time person as ONE. Where the answer is zero, write in "0."

Teacher(s) supervised by you (8, 9)
 Support Services Manager(s) (10,11)
 Case Services Manager(s) (12,13)
 Secretary(ies) or other clerical supervised by you (14,15)
 Vocational Evaluator(s), Work Evaluator(s) (16,17)
 Aide(s) for whose work you are responsible (18,19)
 Other (specify) _____ (20,21)
 Other (specify) _____ (22,23)

7. LOCATION - Please check the box at the right which follows the one best description of the PRIMARY area served by your program.

(24)

central city only, population over 50,000, of a metropolitan area	☐	1
suburbs only, of a city with population over 50,000	☐	2
central city, population over 50,000, AND its suburbs	☐	3
urban/rural, including city or cities of population 10,000 to 50,000	☐	4
mostly rural, may include urban areas under population 10,000	☐	5
other, DEFINE below:	☐	6

8. ORGANIZATION - Please check the box at the right which follows the ONE best description of the kind of organization to which you are responsible in the administration of your program of services to students with special needs in vocational education.

a single, local school district which operates a COMPREHENSIVE educational system, including elementary schools; may also operate a vocational-technical school and/or community college; may offer vocational service to residents of other districts

(25)

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5

a local school district organized PRIMARILY FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION; may cover same area as more than one local general education school district, may be a Joint Powers Board.

a special post-secondary district which is NOT primarily organized for vocational education; an illustration would be a junior college or community college district which is governed by a specific area within the state and which may also provide vocational education service

an intermediate unit or Joint Powers Board providing a number of educational services; NOT PRIMARILY organized for vocational education

other, DEFINE below:

9. Please enter the total operating budget amount for your special needs program only during the current fiscal year, rounded to the nearest thousand.

\$ _____, 0 0 0 (26-29)
(26 27 28 29)

10. SEPARATENESS - Please check the box at the right following the statement that best describes where your special needs program operates in relation to the standard vocational education program.

(30)

special needs program operated in a separate center, physically separate from other programs of vocational education or general education

	1
	2
	3

special needs program operated as an INTEGRAL part of the standard vocational education program of your administrative organization, no separate special needs areas for students (may have special offices for staff)

special needs program neither completely separate nor fully integrated .

11. Is any part of your special needs program provided to students in a non-school public facility such as a sheltered workshop or rehabilitation center, AND the fee paid by the public school, not by vocational rehabilitation? (31)

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2

12. AGE LEVELS - Please enter in the blanks the approximate percentage of the SPECIAL NEEDS students who are at the following levels in your program. Round to the nearest whole number (such as "12%"); must total to 100%.

elementary % (32-34)
junior high or grades 7, 8, 9 % (35-37)
senior high or grades 10, 11, 12 % (38-40)
post secondary to age 21 % (41-43)
adult over age 21 % (44-6)

TOTAL 100 %

13. What is the approximate number of students who are in either average daily attendance or average daily membership in your SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM? (47-50)
- (47 48 49 50)

2
(1) (2,3,4) (5)

14. **NEED TYPES** - Please enter in the blanks the approximate percentages of students in your SPECIAL NEEDS program who have the stated cause-characteristics of special needs. Please round to the nearest whole number (such as "12%"); must total 100%.

handicapped only % (6-8)
 disadvantaged only % (9-11)
 students who have both handicap and disadvantage % (12-14)
 students who are not identified as either handicapped or disadvantaged % (15-17)

TOTAL 100 %

The following questions relate to your experiences and viewpoints. Please do not hesitate to give frank opinions.

15. Please check the box or boxes at the right following ALL of the jobs at which you have been employed in the past for eight months or more:

Teacher in vocational education	☐	1,2 (18)
Vocational education counselor	☐	1,2 (19)
Teacher-coordinator, vocational education	☐	1,2 (20)
Case services or support services manager	☐	1,2 (21)
Teacher in special education	☐	1,2 (22)
Director or supervisor of special education	☐	1,2 (23)
School psychologist	☐	1,2 (24)
Rehabilitation counselor, state employee	☐	1,2 (25)
Vocational adjustment coordinator, school/DVR	☐	1,2 (26)
Teacher in general education	☐	1,2 (27)
School counselor, general education	☐	1,2 (28)

16. What was the title of the professional job which you held immediately before the job you now hold?

(29)

17. Please check the boxes at the right which follow ALL of the professional organizations to which you currently belong.

American Vocational Association	☐	1,2 (30)
Council on Exceptional Children	☐	1,2 (31)
National Rehabilitation Association	☐	1,2 (32)
American Personnel and Guidance Association	☐	1,2 (33)
Nann, Admin. of Special Education	☐	1,2 (34)
NAVESHP	☐	1,2 (35)

18. What is your present level of academic preparation? Please check the highest that applies to you:

BA or BS	☐	1
BA or BS plus 45 quarter credits	☐	2
MA or MS	☐	3
MA or MS plus 45 quarter credits	☐	4
Educational Specialist	☐	5
PhD or EdD	☐	6

(36)

19. Please check, below, ALL of the areas in which you have had at least 9 quarter credits (6 semester credits) of undergraduate or graduate courses:

General education	☐	1,2 (37)
Vocational, and Trade and Industrial	☐	1,2 (38)
Special education	☐	1,2 (39)
Vocational rehabilitation	☐	1,2 (40)
Educational administration, program management	☐	1,2 (41)
Business administration	☐	1,2 (42)

20. Since you have been in your present position, for what ONE aspect of your job did you find yourself to be best prepared?

21. For what ONE aspect of your job did you find yourself to be least well prepared?

Thank you! Please return to:

Gordon Krantz
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